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# American Citizen or Internal Enemy: Reasons Behind the Creation of the Japanese-American Internment Camps

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American Citizen or Internal Enemy: Reasons Behind the Creation of the Japanese-  
American Internment Camps

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History 499: Senior Seminar

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Readers

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December 7, 1941, a date that would live in infamy for the American public. The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and thus opened the Pacific Theater prompting America to go to war. Only two months later on February 19, 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt created Executive Order 9066. This order enacted the forced relocation of 120,000 Japanese-Americans, two-thirds of them American citizens, to internment camps located in deserts and badlands<sup>1</sup>. The government's reasoning behind Executive Order 9066 and the blatant violation of the Japanese-American's citizenship was to secure the nation's west coast from sympathizers and spies. With most of the Japanese-Americans on the west coast living near strategic military positions, the government said it had no choice but to send them to these internment camps.

People consider the Japanese-American internment camps mostly as a reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Because Japan attacked America, the American government secured their home front of thousands of men, women and children who could be dangerous into hastily built internment camps. While no one disagrees that the bombing of Pearl Harbor was a factor in the creation of these Japanese-American internment camps, using this as the sole reasoning behind the internment camps is too simple of an explanation, and glosses over many historical trends in the relationship between the American public and the Japanese-Americans.

The Japanese-American Internment Camps were not a dramatic reaction to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, but rather an extension of the social relationship that the American public had towards this minority group. There has been too much emphasis on the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the public uproar it caused against the Japanese and Japanese-Americans instead of the social relations the American public had towards the Japanese which more greatly influenced the

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1 It should be noted that there was a very distinct difference between the Issei, Japanese immigrants who came to America and the Nisei, Japanese-Americans who were born in America and had American citizenship. While both were interned, they had different reactions in regard to their reaction to internment and after internment.

creation of Executive Order 9066 and subsequent internment. The American government did not need to force all men women and children of Japanese descent into internment camps for years. This was an act of racism and an extension of the exclusion of Japanese-Americans from American society.

Historically speaking, writings about the Japanese-American internment camps did not focus on the racism and exclusion the American government had during the 1950's. An article during the 1950's called "Japanese-American Relocation" by Ruth Vickers discusses the internment process, but claimed it to be for national security reasons. Vickers writes about political reasoning in which these camps happened, such as establishing the War Relocation Authority (WRA), yet fails to recognize tragedy which the Japanese-Americans had to suffer through. This article is very much a product of the time as she gives blanket statements about the Japanese. For example, she states that the Japanese are not a meat eating race; therefore it made sense why they did not have access to meat in the internment camps. She views the Japanese-Americans as a race of people, rather than individuals, which explains her approach to the subject.

The approach towards the Japanese-American internment changed with the rise of the post-modern and post-structuralism ideologies in the field of history. Historians moved away from Vicker's approach of analyzing an event such as the Japanese-American internment from the dominate culture, but rather instead looked at the experiences of those who had to suffer through the camps. Instead of the Japanese-Americans being seen as a different race of people, historians tried to give them individual agency. One example of this shift in mentality towards the Japanese-American internment is John Dower's book called *War Without Mercy: Race and*

*Power in the Pacific War* looks at the relationship between race and power in America. When examining American perspective of the Japanese, Dower emphasizes the unfair perception and treatment of the Japanese-Americans in America. What separates Dower from past historians on the subject is that he writes about the American perception of the Japanese-Americans and how it was a major factor leading to the internment camps. Historians no longer contribute the creation of these camps as national security. Instead historians look at the Japanese-American internment and try to figure out the histories that had not been recorded before. Historians are attempting to understand Japanese-American's experiences rather than just the white Anglo-American experience.

To understand the Japanese-American experience and the reasons behind their internment, we need to study the relationship between the Japanese-Americans and the American public. In doing so we can understand the environment in which the Japanese-Americans lived in and how American attitudes, and not just the bombing of Pearl Harbor, led to the creation of the internment camps. While an event such as Pearl Harbor did cause hostility towards the Japanese-Americans, it was due to already existing racist environment which led to the exclusion of the Japanese-Americans from society and the creation of the internment camps.

To understand the social environment of American during before the Japanese-American internment, we have to look at the nativist ideology which was integrated into American society. Nativism is the theory that only Americans who had ancestors dating back to the first colonies of America were true Americans. This ideology rose throughout the 19th century due to the large amount of immigrants coming to America which were racially and culturally different. Another ideology during this time was Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism the the idea that certain races

of people were more evolved than other races. To a Social Darwinist, the white European man was the most enlightened and evolved human while others were less evolved, such as the Japanese. While the dominate culture thought minorities such as the Japanese were subhuman, it still did not get in the way using new immigrants as cheap labor.

Following their immigration from Japan, the Japanese immigrants were used for their cheap labor, yet were still excluded from American society. While America did not have a large problem with the Japanese when they first arrive during the Californian Gold Rush because of their cheap labor, it was after they started to become somewhat successful that America had problems with them. This sentiment can be seen within American policy such as the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907. This informal policy made America limit immigration from Japan, and Japan would not have emigrants to America. While this did defuse tensions between the two nations, Americans still had a Nativist and Social Darwinian sentiment towards the Japanese.

The Gentlemen's Agreement lasted for a decade or so, but the Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1924 reared America's ugly xenophobic nature towards the Japanese. The Immigration Act of 1917 pushed for more regulated immigration standards, and officially limited immigration from Japan to America. The Immigration Act of 1924 however was much more explicit in showing America's xenophobia. This act developed a quota for the amount of immigrants per country which could come into America based on the total percentage of the population of that group living in America. To skew the numbers towards desirable immigrants, America based their statistics on the 1890 census, thus limited minorities such as the Japanese.<sup>2</sup>

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2 Mae Ngai. *Impossible Subjects Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Oxfordshire, Princeton University Press, 2004.

Fortunately, the public opinion Americans had towards minority groups changed during the 1940's. Minority groups such as Italians and Russians were being included to America's melting pot and were considered real Americans. Unfortunately, the Japanese-Americans were still viewed differently. Frank Sinatra was given awards for his -progressive 1945 film *The House I Live In* by fighting against religious and racial discrimination, yet during the film he told heroic stories of, "Americans bombing the Japs."<sup>3</sup> This dichotomy and irony of Sinatra's praise for racial equality exists at the same time in which American believe that the Japanese-Americans were lesser people. How could American society applaud Sinatra for his progressiveness yet send 120,000 Japanese-Americans to internment camps?

While politically the Japanese were discriminated against, they suffered social discrimination as well in American society. To the public, the Japanese were not even men, but rather a subspecies more alike to an ape. An example of this is a cartoon which shows a monkey looking into a mirror, and a stereotypical Japanese man's face was the reflection. The cartoon is titled, "Man or Beast?" and it questioned the humanity of the Japanese, wondering if they were apes, humans with arrested development, or the Darwinian missing link.<sup>4</sup> Japanese and Japanese-Americans depicted in American pop media reflects the xenophobia sentiment American society had towards them. In newspaper comics the Japanese were depicted as apes, vermin, or subhuman scum. While an ape would sound like a strong animal depiction, such as Russia as a bear, America wanted to portray the Japanese as unintelligent, yet strong and sneaky enough to harm Americans.<sup>5</sup> Even when depicted as human, the Japanese always had animalistic features, such as being hunched over like an ape or they would have teeth such as a wild beast. These

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3 Maltz, Albert. *The House I Live In*. Film. Performed by Frank Sinatra. (1945)

4 Dower. *War Without Mercy* 89

5 John Dower. *War Without Mercy, Race and Power in the Pacific War*. New York, Random House, 1986. 82

motifs which started in the early 20th century continued all of the way through World War II and the Japanese-American internment. What is odd about these comic strips is the paranoia and fear towards a group of people who did not show any threatening characteristics, yet any non-white people threatened those with this nativist ideology. These viewpoints started as white nativists' ideology in the early 19th century and were maintained well throughout the 1940's. Due to this discrimination from the public, the Japanese-Americans had to find jobs which were low skilled and low paying, such as working in factories or sugar farms.

It is no surprise from this evidence that Pearl Harbor further demonized the already suspicious people. Americans already viewed the Japanese people as strange, backwards and frightening enemies of America. This event only further exacerbated this hatred towards the Japanese-Americans. While Pearl Harbor caused a panicked reaction from the American public, it does not directly or logically follow through to the Japanese-Americans being relocated to internment camps. The creation of these camps racially charged and was based on these beliefs that had been established long before the bombing of Pearl Harbor and at that point ingrained into American society. If these beliefs were not so ingrained to society, one could argue that relocating and interning 120,000 people would not have been the government's reaction to this crisis. The way in which the Japanese-Americans were treated after the events of Pearl Harbor is a direct reaction of this nativist mentality.

After Pearl Harbor, the line between Japanese-American and Japanese was reduced and even removed in some cases. One internee named Akiko K writes how, "[After Pearl Harbor] ...December 8th, one of the teachers said, "You people bombed Pearl Harbor." And I'm going, "My people?" All of a sudden my Japaneseness became very aware to me. I no longer felt I'm an



equal American, that I felt kind of threatened and nervous about it”<sup>6</sup> While there was a distinction between the Japanese-Americans and the “normal” Americans, Pearl Harbor further separated these two groups and drew more connections of the Japanese-Americans to the Japanese to the point that the Japanese were not just a minority group, but were the enemy to America. Lt. General DeWitt, the head of the internment process, states,

Because of the ties of race, the intense feeling of filial piety and the strong bonds of common tradition, culture and customs, [the Japanese] population [on the West Coast] presented a tightly-knit racial group... While it is believed that some were loyal, it was known that many were not. It was impossible to establish the identity of the loyal and the disloyal with any degree of safety. It was not there was insufficient time in which to make such a determination; it was simply a matter of facing the realities that a positive determination could not be made, that an exact separation of the 'sheep from the goats' was unfeasible.<sup>7</sup>

For DeWitt, it was impossible to separate the loyal from the disloyal because of their inherent race. The Japanese-American loyalty to America did not matter, as DeWitt famously said, “A Jap's a Jap. It makes no difference whether the Jap is a citizen or not.”<sup>8</sup>

Not surprisingly, this hostile attitude towards the Japanese led to drastic measures to be taken against them. Roosevelt authorized Executive Order 9066, and 120,000 people of Japanese descent were to be sent to internment camps. One of the main questions with Japanese-American internment is why did the government send all 120,000 people of Japanese descent to these internment camps? A massive removal of people and the creation of the internment camps is a large amount of work and effort towards national security. The government did not differentiate

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6 Jennifer Jones, curator. “A More Perfect Union.” Smithsonian National Museum of American History. (2001) <http://amhistory.si.edu/perfectunion/experience/index.html> (May 12, 2015)

7 John L. DeWitt, Letter of Transmittal to Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, June 5 1943 for *Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast, 1942*.

8 Mikiso Hane, “Wartime Internment.” *The Journal of American History* Vol. 77, No. 2 (1990): 574

people based on where they lived, or the probability of being a spy or harmful towards the nation's western coast. An internee named Mary Tsukamoto after hearing about Executive Order 9066 wrote,

We were shocked to realize that the President had signed this. We just kept saying, "But... we live out in the valley, not on the West Coast, not near, a... an airport or a naval base." Surely, you know, they wouldn't think that we needed to move too because we were busy raising strawberries, and harvesting crops that would really help our nation. We couldn't believe that they would need all of us to quit our work to produce our fruit, food for victory... and then be put away.<sup>9</sup>

While the government claimed that these camps were created for national security against enemy spies, there was not widespread action to intern German or Italian Americans. While there were around 12,000 German-Americans and 2,000 Italian-Americans who were interned after Pearl Harbor, these camps did not intern a large percent of these populations. The Japanese-Americans internment was different. The reason for the difference between the internment numbers between the Japanese-American and the German-American or Italian-American camps was due to the nativist viewpoint America had towards the Japanese-Americans. America had accepted the German-American and the Italian-American as real Americans due to their European heritage, yet the Japanese-Americans were not accepted. Because the Japanese-Americans were not of European decent, nativists argued they were inferior to European Americans. As described before, they were seen as apes, waiting to stab an American in the back whenever the opportunity might arise. To the public, they were the enemy. Lt. General Dewitt said that, "You needn't worry about the Italians at all except in certain cases. Also, the same for the Germans except in individual cases. But we must worry about the Japanese all the time until

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9 Hane, "Wartime Internment." 570

they is wiped off the map.”<sup>10</sup> Some Japanese-Americans were loyal to Japan, as seen with the loyalty questionnaire, but many viewed America as their home<sup>11</sup>. Yet American still saw the Japanese-Americans as possible threats to the United States.

Because of this, America saw the Japanese-American relocation as a perfectly fair way of dealing with their internal enemies. It was completely unnecessary for the American government to send all 120,000 men, women and children to these camps. But if anyone of Japanese heritage were viewed as apes, subhuman, and America's enemies, it was much easier to justify the forced removal of them from American society. The end of the propaganda film *Japanese Relocation* describes how America was treating their enemies fairly inside of the internment camps, and that the axis powers should follow after America's version of internment camps.<sup>12</sup> This mentality that 120,000 people, many of them living in America for their entire life, were the enemy does not develop overnight, or only because of a tragic event such as the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Executive Order 9066 is an extension of the nativist ideology America had to the Japanese.

This unfair treatment of the Japanese-Americans can be seen when the Japanese Americans had to relocate to these internment camps. The Americans forced the Japanese-American had to abandon their homes carrying only what they could with them. Then the Japanese-Americans were loaded into cars and went to the dust bowels of America, badlands where no one wanted to live. The Japanese-Americans lived in these wastelands for years. The conditions in the internment camps were terrible. Violent dust storms greeted the newly interned. There were bathrooms without stalls, housing was shared between families without separators,

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10 Hane, “Wartime Internment.” 574

11 Mae Ngai. *Impossible Subjects*

12 Office of War Information, *Japanese Relocation*. Film. War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry.  
– Bureau of Motion Pictures

and lines for everything from food to picking up mail. Mine Okubo, a Japanese-American who was interned at Topaz War Relocation Center, writes in *Citizen 13660*,

There was a lack of privacy everywhere. The incomplete partitions in the [latrine] stalls and the barracks made a single symphony of yours and your neighbors' loves, hates, and joys. One had to get used to snores, baby-crying, family troubles... The sewage system was poor, [and] the stench from the stagnant sewage was terrible.<sup>13</sup>

Some of the first camps were not even for humans. John Dower writes how many Japanese-Americans lived in animal stalls, “At the Santa Anita assembly center, which eventually housed eight-five hundred Japanese-Americans, only four days elapsed between the removal of the horses and the arrival of the first Japanese-Americans.”<sup>14</sup> The internees had to sleep on hay and deal with the stench of manure mixed with turpentine paint.<sup>15</sup> These conditions combined with the desert locations led to a large amount of suffering for those who were interned.

Why then did the United States government build these camps in deserts and badlands? The reasoning for the development of these camps in the desert were three-fold. First, the government made these camps so it was difficult to escape. Secondly, these camps were far enough away from the pacific coast ports where the Japanese-Americans could spy on. Finally, and more importantly, the government attempted to transform these deserts into farmland. What is a better source of cheap labor than people inside of internment camps? *Japanese Relocation* excitingly describes that the Japanese-American internees were going to, “reclaim the desert,”

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13 Mine Okubo, *Citizen 13660*. New York, University of Washington Press. 1983

14 Dower, *War Without Mercy*. 78

15 Frank Wu. “Difficult Decisions During Wartime: A Letter From a Non-Alien in an Internment Camp to a Friend Back Home” *Case Western Reserve Law Review* 54, no. 4 (2004): 1321.

for America.<sup>16</sup> While forced labor is not humane, some benefits were seen for both the internees and the American government. Karl Lillquist argues that these farms were critical in feeding and providing employment for the internees and readying them for post-internment work. For the government, it demonstrated how advanced farming techniques could allow farms in harsh conditions and readied the land for post-war homesteaders.<sup>17</sup>

While the environmental conditions were terrible, the treatment they received by the guards were just as poor. The guards' job in the internment camps were not to protect the Japanese-Americans, but rather to keep them from getting out. One internee writes how, "...I couldn't take my eyes off my children for even a moment so that they would not go outside the fence. The guards were to shoot anyone that did."<sup>18</sup> A WRA investigation of Manzanar writes,

The guards have been instructed to shoot anyone who attempts to leave the Center without a permit, and who refuses to halt when ordered to do so. The guards are armed with guns that are effective at a range of up to 500 yards. I asked Lt. Buckner if a guard ordered a Japanese who was out of bounds to halt and the Jap did not do so, would the guard actually shoot him. Lt. Buckner's reply was that he only hoped the guard would bother to ask him to halt. He explained that the guards were finding guard service very monotonous, and that nothing would suit them better than to have a little excitement, such as shooting a Jap.

Some time ago, a Japanese [Nisei] was shot for being outside of a Center. . . . The guard said that he ordered the Japanese to halt-that the Japanese started to run away from him, so he shot him. The Japanese was seriously injured, but recovered. He said that he was collecting scrap lumber to make shelves in his house, and that he did not hear the guard say halt. The guard's story does not appear to be accurate, inasmuch as the Japanese was wounded in the front and not in the back.<sup>19</sup>

As seen here, the guards for the internment camps were bored with their station defending the internment camps rather than going off to war and fighting the Japanese. Any

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16 *Japanese Relocation*

17 Karl Lillquist. "Farming the Desert: Agriculture in the World War II-Era Japanese-American Relocation Centers" *Agricultural History* Vol. 84, No. 1 (2010): 74

18 Jones, "Conditions."

19 Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians. *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*. (2000): 175.

chance that they could have to “shoot a Jap,” they would take, even if they were innocent. These guards, much like the American public, viewed these people who were interned as the enemy. A journalist during World War II named Ernie Pyle wrote, “In Europe we felt that our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people. But out here I soon gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice.”<sup>20</sup> The head of the Japanese-American internment Lt. General De Witt shared these same views. Mikiso Hane reflects back on her internment, remembering De Witt stating, “... that there was no distinction between Japanese in Japan and Japanese Americans in the United States. ‘A Jap’s a Jap,’ he asserted. In testifying before a congressional committee in early 1943, he said, ‘We will have to worry about the Japs until they are wiped off the face of the map.’ In other words, what he had in mind was akin to Adolph Hitler’s “final solution.”<sup>21</sup> In essence the Japanese-Americans who were citizens of the United States were now prisoners to the same country.

Compared to the living conditions German prisoners of war camps which were scattered across America, the Japanese-American internment camps were equal at best. While the Japanese-Americans did have some rights, much like the German prisoner of war camps, the American government had to stick very closely to the Geneva conventions when dealing with the German prisoner of war camps. This led to a larger amount of food for the Germans and more freedom overall. One German prisoner wrote, “...the food is excellent; this is a marvelous and healthful climate... .I am taking courses toward my Meisterzeugnis (Certificate of

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20 Dower. *War Without Mercy* 89

21 Hane, “Wartime Internment.” 575

Maturity)...conditions are much better than I expected...I am even taking piano lessons....”<sup>22</sup>

Another German prisoner stated, “When I was captured I weighed 128 pounds. After two years as an American POW weighed 185. I had gotten so fat you could no longer see my eyes.”<sup>23</sup>

Compared to the Japanese-American diet in the internment camps, which consisted of rice, and sometimes low-grade meat and fish, the German prisoners of war were eating like kings. The Japanese-Americans were being treated worse than the captured German soldiers, who were literally the enemies of America.

While they were interned, the Japanese-Americans also worked. The movie *Japanese Relocation* portrayed the Japanese-Americans happily working the fields. In reality the Japanese-Americans were forced to work long hours and were paid very little for their effort. The average worker's pay was from twelve to nineteen dollars a month, which was under minimum wage. The movie also failed to mention that the camps made children as young as eight years old work. While this was obviously illegal, these policies were created because it was easy to use this large group of people to work and “reclaim the desert,” for the government's benefit. *Japanese Relocation* states that they took these measures to, “protect themselves without violating the principles of christian decency,” and made sure to make a distinction of those who were loyal and those who were not.<sup>24</sup>

Popular media during this time further reinforced the perception of the Japanese-Americans as loyal to Japan and the enemies of America. Not surprisingly, the same tropes about the Japanese Americans before the war carried over and were expanded during it. Rather than

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22 Arnold Krammer. “German Prisoners of War in the United States” *Military Affairs* Vol. 40, No. 2 (1976): 72.

23 Lewis H. Carlson. *We Were Each Other's Prisoners: An Oral History of World War II American and German Prisoners of War*. New York: Basic Books. (1997) 135

24 *Japanese Relocation*

just being a dumb ape, the Japanese were seen as monsters, brutes, and pure evil. This popular portrayal was seen in newspapers, films, and even comic books. A comic by Theodor Seuss Geisel, more commonly known as Dr. Seuss, titled, “Waiting from the Signal From Home,” shows stereotypical Japanese-Americans lining up all the way from Washington to California to receive TNT from a Japanese-American man. Another Japanese-American is shown with a telescope just waiting from the signal from the Japanese ships in the background to blow up the west coast of America. Geisel makes the Japanese-Americans the same, to argue that they are all a cohesive group, and that they are all traitors to America. One character which was printed multiple times that encompassed these traits was Tokio Kid. He is depicted as a short man with squinted eyes, and large sharp teeth that covered most of his face. Usually there was a swastika on him or around him, and he always carried a recently bloodied knife. The writing on the posters would be him saying, in broken English, how the lack of civilian effort towards the war front made the Japanese very happy. While the use of the Japanese as the villain was to encourage the Americans to support the war effort, yet came at a large social cost of more than just passive racism or exclusion, but rather active hatred towards the Japanese-American.

The U.S. navy training film *Our Enemy-The Japanese* further highlights the popular opinion of the Japanese. The narrator starts the film by saying that, “...[the Japanese] have modern weapons, but their thinking is 2000 years out of date.”<sup>25</sup> The narrator argues how the Japanese are fanatics under their Shinto religion and they mindlessly follow their emperor. He states that the Japanese's only goal is for world domination. The narrator further states that the Japanese are trying to literally destroy America when they should be grateful towards America.

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25 Office of War Information *Our Enemy—The Japanese* War Activities Committee of the Motion Picture Industry 1943



The narrator fails to take into account the past decades in which America stopped all Japanese immigrants and depicted the Japanese as savages subhuman apes. Ironically, the narrator talks about the Japanese abuse of propaganda in the war effort, yet the film is of itself an abuse of propaganda to support the war effort. While this film is racist and grievously wrong in many aspects about Japanese society, this was what people were told to believe.

This was not the sentiment with all Americans though. While this was the public opinion of the Japanese-Americans, it does not mean this opinion was shared with every single American. For example, some large newspapers such as the *L.A. Times* changed their opinion during internment. At first they supported the government's actions towards interning the Japanese-Americans writing, "A viper is nonetheless a viper wherever the egg is hatched – so a Japanese-American, born of Japanese parents, grows up to be a Japanese not an American."<sup>26</sup> Later during the internment, they questioned interning so many people and people who did not live close enough to spy on important military locations.<sup>27</sup> Most Black and Jewish civil justice groups did not respond towards the abuse of the Japanese-Americans. They sought to improve their status with the dominate culture at the time. They knew about the denial of Japanese-American citizenship, yet these groups were already being scrutinized by the dominate culture and did not want to also be accused of being traitors to America.<sup>28</sup> One of the only groups which tried to help the Japanese-Americans was the Quakers. They tried to get Japanese-American college students out of the internment camps as well as send care packages for those who were suffering inside these internment camps. Yet sadly these are few exceptions to the negative

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26 Dower. *War Without Mercy*. 91

27 Gary Y. Okihiro and Julie Sly. "The Press, Japanese Americans, and the Concentration Camps." *Phylon* (1960-) Vol. 44, No. 1 (1983): 80.

28 Cheryl Greenberg. "Black and Jewish Responses to Japanese Internment" *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 14, No. 2 (1995): 3-37

public opinion of the Japanese-Americans during this time period. Most folks shared DeWitt's opinion that, "a Jap is a Jap, it makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not."

The pinnacle of the mistrust of the Japanese people was the loyalty questionnaire. This was a questionnaire for those who were interned and it asked these people if they were loyal to the United States or Japan. The main problem with this questionnaire was the vagueness of the questions asked. It was a long eighty question test that doubted the loyalty to America. An example of this questionnaire is question twenty-eight which asked, "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power or organization?"<sup>29</sup> While these questions were unfair towards the Japanese-Americans who already relocated to these camps, to the Americans they could never be sure about the Japanese betraying them. A portion of the Japanese-Americans inside of the internment camps answered no to that question, and were considered traitors to the American government. Who could blame them when the country they were loyal to sent them to internment camps? Still, these questionnaires showed how paranoid the American public was towards the Japanese-Americans.

Interestingly enough, this paranoia did not extend of all Japanese-Americans. The Japanese-American Internment Camps is that it only targeted mainland Japanese-Americans. 120,000 Japanese-Americans on the mainland were sent to these camps, yet none of Hawaiian Japanese-Americans were sent to these camps. In fact, many Japanese-Americans from Hawaii enlisted into the military. How was it fair that one group of individuals were forcibly relocated to

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29 Ngai. *Impossible Subjects*.

internment camps, yet another was allowed to serve in the military? The men who served in the military were fighting for the freedom of America, yet people of the same descent were thrown into these camps.

One reasoning for this lack of Hawaiian Japanese-American internment is the amount of Hawaii's population that is composed of Japanese ancestry. The population of Hawaii had 150,000 or more Japanese-Americans which made about a third of the population.<sup>30</sup> The American government realized that this would cause a large amount problems with employment, and so it did not intern these people. This is very hypocritical that the American government would intern mainland Japanese-Americans due to "pearl harbor" and "national security reasons," yet are fine with the Hawaiian Japanese-Americans continue to work or even enlist in the military.

The Japanese-Americans who entered the military were not well received after the war. Instead of being military veterans, they were seen as Japanese-Americans. One soldier wrote,

I think we all felt that we had an obligation to do the best we could and make a good record. So that when we came back we can come back with our heads high and say, Look, we did as much as anybody else for this country and we proved our loyalty; and now we would like to take our place in the community just like anybody else and not as a segregated group of people...<sup>31</sup>

The Japanese-American internment was officially deemed unconstitutional in *Korematsu vs. United States* on December 18, 1944. Nevertheless it took until 1945 to officially release the Japanese-Americans from these camps. Upon release, they were given twenty-five dollars, which is in today's dollars three-hundred, and a free trip back to their homes. While the political

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30 Ogawa, Dennis M. and Fox, Jr., Evarts C. *Japanese Americans, from Relocation to Redress*. (1991): 135.

31 Jones, "Ironies of Service."

fight was over, the American public still held a grudge against the Japanese people. When the Japanese-Americans returned to their homes, they found their homes vandalized, burnt, and sometimes even destroyed. This destruction was coupled with the pre-internment communities destroyed during the internment. The war was over and America was now allied with Japan, but the racism which had been ingrained into society for years did not simply go away.

While America prides itself with becoming allies with the Japanese, they still viewed them as lesser people. One example is a postwar propaganda poster which depicts a Japanese person as an ape on an American shoulder. While it is showing the union between the two nations, it still puts the Americans as betters to the Japanese, and the Japanese as clueless apes rather than blood-thirsty back-stabbing apes. While this was the relationship which the American government wanted to create, this was not the mentality that the American public had towards the Japanese or the Japanese-Americans. During this time many of the Japanese-Americans wanted to become the model minority, and to be accepted back into society.

American history portrays the Japanese-Americans bouncing back from internment to become the model minority, yet Aimee Chin writes in her article, “Long-Run Labor Market Effects of Japanese American Internment during World War II on Working-Age Male Internees.” that the internment camps and the consequences of the anti-Japanese propaganda caused a generation of workers to be setback. Rather than training and becoming highly skilled workers such as doctors or lawyers, many of the Japanese-Americans were becoming low skilled laborers, such as farmers or factory workers, or became self-employed.<sup>32</sup> While this did change by modern time, this still pushed back a generation of people moving socially upwards. The

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32 Aimee Chin. “Long-Run Labor Market Effects of Japanese American Internment during World War II on Working-Age Male Internees” *Journal of Labor Economics*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2005): 523

Japanese did not recover easily from the internment into the model minority, but rather suffered due to the internment camps. Chin asks how successful could these people had been would be if Executive Order 9066 was not created?

While this event hurt Japanese-Americans, the Japanese-American women began to change their role in society. During internment, women were given more responsibilities and jobs. While they were paid a very small amount, they were paid the same as men. This was a step towards more equal gender relationships in the Japanese-American culture. Valerie Matsumoto writes how one consequence of Japanese-American internment was the breaking down of the traditional gender roles. Much like Japanese culture, it was expected for Japanese-American women to marry and settle down to be a housewife and raise kids. The catastrophic nature of the Japanese-American internment camps made Japanese-American women think about changing their lives and doing more than just what was expected of them before internment.<sup>33</sup>

The legacy of internment shows the prejudices that America had against minority groups who did not fit the mold of the “real” Americans. While America interned 120,000 people into these camps for years, this event is rarely talked about compared to other topics about America during World War II. This lack of emphasis on Japanese-American internment demonstrates the difference between popular and scholarly history. This event does not have to do with America's victory in World War II. The concentration camps in Germany actually tried to terminate people inside of them. The internment camps, however, shows that America is no better than Nazi Germany or Japan in the creation of these types of camps. The internment camps also shows the

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33 Valerie Matsumoto. “Japanese American Women during World War II.” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* Vol. 8, No. 1 (1984): 9

hatred between the dominate American culture to the Japanese-Americans throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This kind of hatred towards a certain group of individuals does not just spontaneously happen. While Pearl Harbor was a catastrophic event towards Japanese-American relations, throughout American history the Japanese-Americans had been discriminated against and excluded. It would not have been surprised if the Americans created Japanese-American internment camps without the events of Pearl Harbor transpiring. The hatred towards the Japanese-Americans was there, ready to explode. Pearl Harbor was merely a match to a powered keg ready to explode.

In conclusion, while Pearl Harbor did disrupt America's relation to Japanese and people of Japanese descent, it was not the sole cause or a major factor in the creation of the Japanese-American internment camps. What really caused the creation of these camps was the subhuman view of the Japanese and the concept that they were loyal to their own country no matter where they lived. It is this in which historians should focus as the major cause leading towards the creation of the Japanese-American Internment Camps. The Japanese-American side of the story was silenced for decades after the internment camps. It was not until 1988's when the government formally apologized to those who had to suffer through the internment camps. While the previous internees were compensated with 20,000 dollars, it does not erase that pain and suffering which the Japanese-Americans had to suffer through. These people were considered subhuman for decades and then were forcible thrown into internment camps.

The history of America is one of inclusion and exclusion. The Japanese-American internment camps are one of the most sever examples of what happens when America excluded a

minority from society. While the Japanese-American Internment camps only lasted for a couple of years, the effect on the Japanese-American population were felt for years afterward. This study of the Japanese-American internment camps shows how America was not innocent during World War II. America vilified some of its own citizens and removed their rights and excluded them from society by locking them in internment camps.

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